1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda
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# CHAPTER II

## THE TODA PEOPLE

[113] 141 I DO not propose to describe at any length the physical characters of the Todas.[1] It must be sufficient to say here that the people differ remarkably in general appearance, and perhaps still more remarkably in general bearing, from the other inhabitants of Southern India. The average height of the men is about 5 ft. 7 in., and that of the women 5 ft. 1 in.; both are well-proportioned, and the men robustly built. Their heads are distinctly dolichocephalic, the cephalic index of the men being 73·3. The shaved heads of the children show very well the great length, and probably owing to the special method of shaving (see Figs. 63 and 64), this feature is in them exaggerated so as to seem almost abnormal.

142 The nose is usually well-formed and not especially broad, the nasal index being 74·9. It is often distinctly rounded in profile. The skin is of a rich brown colour, distinctly lighter than that of most of the Dravidian inhabitants of Southern India. The skins of the women are lighter than those of the men. There is much hair on the bodies of the men, who usually grow thick beards, and the hair of the head is

●147 luxuriant in both men and women. The men are strong and very agile; the agility being most in evidence when they have to catch their infuriated buffaloes at the funeral ceremonies. They stand fatigue well, and often travel great distances. One day I met an old man about seventy years of age going to the market at Gudalur for a supply

[1] Those who wish for information on this point should consult the articles by Mr. Edgar Thurston in the *Bulletins* of the Madras Museum, vol. i., pp. 148 and 207, and vol. iv., p. 2.

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda



of grain, and in the evening I met him on his return carrying a large and heavy bag. He had travelled over thirty miles, had gone down and again come up some 3,000 feet, and most of his journey had been in a climate much warmer than that of his native hills.

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FIG. 1.—TODA MAN. FULL FACE.

My guide at the end of the day would sometimes go a distance of eight or ten miles and back to arrange for my supply of men for the next day's work, and I have seen him on these occasions running at a steady pace which he would keep up for miles. In going from one part of the hills to another, a Toda always travels as nearly as possible in

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1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda



147 481 153 a straight line, ignoring altogether the influence of gravity, and mounting the steepest hills with no apparent effort.

In all my work with the men, it seemed to me that they were extremely intelligent. They grasped readily the points of any inquiry upon which I entered, and often showed a

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FIG. 2.—TODA MAN. SIDE FACE.

marked appreciation of complicated questions. They were interested in the customs of other parts of the world, and appeared to grasp readily the essential differences between their own ways and those of other peoples. It is very difficult to estimate general intelligence, and to compare definitely the intelligence of different individuals, still more of people of

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda



One day I observed a stone near the village of Pakhalkudr, and, asking whether it was for tip-cat, was told of a different game. If a man jumped high enough at the stone, he could see the top of a certain hill. On jumping at the stone I could not see the hill, but by going a little way back, I found that it became visible, and as far as I could judge, the jump necessary at the stone would be a possible though a good performance. 526

At many villages there is a large globular stone called *tukitthkars* (lifted stone) and in another of the Toda games this stone is lifted. A man should be able to lift it to the shoulder, but this can now rarely, if ever, be done, and some of the stones can only be lifted a little way from the ground. Mr. Thurston saw the stone at Nòdrs lifted as high as the pit of the stomach. These stones seem to afford clear evidence of the degeneration of the Todas in physical strength. There is little doubt that they could be lifted much better by the Todas of a generation or two ago. Thus there is a stone at Nidrsi which was brought by the grandfather of Kudrmaskutan (43) in the pocket of his *putkuli* from a place called Attibadi at a considerable distance from Nidrsi. At the present time no Toda can do more than lift the stone a little way from the ground. The *tukittthkars* may not be lifted either on the *madnol* or the *palinol*. Feasts are prohibited on these days, and it is probable that the stone was often lifted on festive occasions. There is evidence that, in some places at any rate, the stone has acquired in some degree a sacred character. Thus, at the village of Kiudr, one of the most sacred of Toda dairies, the *tukitthkars* lies on a raised wall surrounding the dairy and in this situation would most certainly acquire some of the sanctity of its surroundings. 147 526 778

The Todas are very interested in athletic feats performed by any of their number and sometimes put up memorials of such feats. Thus, at Pishkwosht there are two stones marking the distance once jumped by a Toda. Such an athletic feat may be made the subject of a bet. Thus, four generations ago, one of the ancestors of Kudrmaskutan (43) jumped a stream called Kavageir, winning eighteen *nakh* (three-year-old 517 526 211 525 177

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda



CHAP. X.

The precise number of Mands occupied at any one time, has not been ascertained, but the best authorities consider them to be not less than 40. Hence, by a short calculation, we find that the tribe consisted, in 1870, of not less than 407 males + 306 females, or 713 souls; of whom 258 were men in the prime of life. 161 162 621

Now, if the Report from which I have just quoted,[1] should be correct, it would appear that the tribe has more than doubled in about 23 years; and the opportunity, has been lost to me; of witnessing the process, and of ascertaining the causes, by means of which a race may die out. With every desire for the happiness of existing Todas, I still grieve to have been deprived of the interesting study. 161

It is very much to be lamented that no vital statistics exist of the people: and that such as I have been able to collect, cannot be depended upon, absolutely; being merely approximate. 162

1. Of the 196 people found noted in the Census Table,[2] I ascertained by personal inspection that there were only 2 cases of natural malformation; viz., in the village of Koanakoar, a young woman who was a cripple from birth: in Keshkir, a girl squinting with one eye. 732

2. Only 3 people possessed defects that would either tend to shorten life or to evidence the probability of its soon drawing to a close; viz., in Ebgodu, a man nearly deaf and blind from old age: in the same village an infant with a skin disease: and in Kirzho, a middle-aged man in bad general health. 165 147

Many were scored on the shoulder as a remedy for rheumatism. One woman was in quarantine after child-birth. And one woman was blind of an eye from a spark of fire having flown into it. It is said that contagious disease is not uncommon, but I am greatly disposed to doubt the statement, as applied to the present day. None came before me marked by smallpox. A case of leprosy was met with; but as the 737 164

[1] [See p. 102, category 116 -- Analyst]

[2] [See pp. 98 and 99, category 116 -- Analyst]

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda



CHAP. X. man afflicted with that dreadful malady, was not amongst the 196 people of the census, the case cannot be used in these calculations.

As regards the general appearance of the people; a large proportion of both sexes and of all ages are doubtless in excellent health. Up to the age of fourteen, the children are certainly, and almost universally, hale and hearty. The young women look well, too: but the young men are often bottle-nosed, with a general appearance of deficient circulation, insufficient food, and of athletic exercise. Nature seems to make competent arrangements, by means of which the female sex is able to bear children during the extra period that young men require for the purpose of completing their growth. It is probably a consequence or a portion of this design, that renders girls as a general rule more easy to rear than boys. Be that as it may, these rather weedy youths fill out in course of time, and complete their features with mature age—the large nose is rarely, or perhaps never, apparent in the young; and seems not to attain its climax till near the age of thirty—the women in advanced years are often draggled in appearance, from poverty and child-bearing. The full-grown men look strong and well.

Now for our examination into the augmentation of the numbers of the people.

If we allow, that out of the 3 people recorded in paragraph (x) to be in a state of health unfavourable to prolonged existence, 2 die in the course of the year. And suppose that another 2 die in the same period from other causes—a high rate for those who, living a pastoral and quiet life in a healthy climate, are exposed to few vicissitudes—we have then 4 deaths amongst 196 people, in the course of twelve months; or 2 per cent. per annum, as the extreme death-rate for *all ages*.

In the years between 1838 and 1861, the average ratio of mortality in Great Britain—a country in which high civilisa-

4: King G-5 (no date) 1870 Aw60 Toda Aw60



181 which haunt the hills, although the latter, as I can testify, frequently attack and kill his buffaloes. During my sojourn out there, parties of Todas would often come many miles distance to give us information of these occurrences, both for the sake of the *enam*, or present, they got for so doing, as well as to obtain the assistance of a rifle or two, to rid them of their enemy. The practice on these occasions is to repair to the spot where the carcase of the partly-eaten buffalo has been left, and to lie in wait till dark for the tiger, which invariably returns at night to
● 147 feast on his prey. To show the activity and endurance of these men, I may mention that I have seen them at such times, after having walked ten or twelve miles in the heat of the sun, stand talking to one another till our horses were ready, and then, without any sort of refreshment or rest whatever, set out on their return with the greatest alacrity, keeping up with us the whole way.
136 The buffaloes in question are of the kind one sees in Egypt and on the plains of India, black-skinned, ungainly animals, sparsely sprinkled with long coarse bristles, and having wide-spreading flattened horns. The herds belonging to the Todas comprise, however, very much larger and finer animals than are to be found in the low country; they are, moreover, exceedingly savage when Europeans come near them. I have frequently been charged by a whole herd when on horseback, and obliged to take to a smart canter to avoid them. Nevertheless, one may see them any day
343 driven at will by little naked Toda urchins. Each *mund* has an
417 enclosure or pen called a *Tooel*, in which the buffaloes are con-
234 fined at night; it is generally circular in form, and consists of a low wall of loose stones surrounding a sunk area within. As these pens are never cleaned out, the interior becomes in time so much elevated, that the fence has to be heightened by the addition of thorns and cut branches. When the buffaloes come home at evening, the Todas who may be standing near invariably salute them with the greatest gravity and respect. Though they have numerous large herds of these animals, the Todas never kill them
778 for food, keeping them solely for the sake of their milk. There are a certain number of sacred buffaloes belonging to each of their *terrarees*, or holy places, and these are never milked, but with their young by their sides, lead a privileged life, the honour being
262 apparently hereditary. Milk is, it may be mentioned, the principal diet of these people, either in its natural state, or sour, like

7:Thurston E-5 (no date)1909
AW60 Toda AW60



These scars are produced by burning the skin
304 [824] [234] [755] with red-hot sticks of *Litsæa Wightiana* (the sacred fire-stick). The Todas believe that the branding enables them to milk the buffaloes with perfect ease, or as Dr. Rivers puts it, that it cures the pain caused by the fatigue of milking. "The marks," he says, "are made when a boy is about twelve years old, at which age he begins to milk the buffaloes." About the fifth month of a woman's first pregnancy, on the new-moon day, she [843] goes through a ceremony, in which she brands herself, or is branded by another woman, by means of a rag rolled up, dipped in oil and lighted, with a dot on the carpo-metacarpal joint of each thumb and on each wrist.

142 The women are lighter in colour than the men, and the colour of the body has been aptly described as of a *café-au-lait* tint. The skin of the female children and young adults is often of a warm copper hue. Some of [302] the young women, with their raven-black hair dressed in glossy ringlets, and bright glistening eyes, are distinctly good-looking, but both good looks and complexion are [145] short-lived, and the women speedily degenerate into uncomely hags. As in Maori land, so in Toda land, [562] one finds a race of superb men coupled to hideous women, and, with the exception of the young girls, the fair sex is the male sex. Both men and women cover 291 their bodies with a white mantle with blue and red lines, [439] called putkŭli, which is purchased in the Ootacamund [531] bazar, and is sometimes decorated with embroidery worked by the Toda women. The odour of the person ● 147 of the Todas, caused by the rancid butter which they [294] apply to the mantle as a preservative reagent, or with [237] which they anoint their bodies, is quite characteristic. [302] With a view to testing his sense of smell, long after our return from Paikara, I blindfolded a friend who had accompanied me thither, and presented before his nose

7:Thurston E-5 (no date)1909
AW60 Toda AW60



a cloth, which he at once recognised as having something to do with the Todas. 147

In former times, a Badaga could be at once picked out from the other tribes of the Nīlgiri plateau by his wearing a turban. At the present day, some Toda elders and important members of the community (*e.g.*, monegars or headmen) have adopted this form of head-gear. The men who were engaged as guides by Dr. Rivers and myself donned the turban in honour of their appointment. 292 177 [554]

Toda females are tattooed after they have reached puberty. I have seen several multiparæ, in whom the absence of tattoo marks was explained either on the ground that they were too poor to afford the expense of the operation, or that they were always suckling or pregnant—conditions, they said, in which the operation would not be free from danger. The dots and circles, of which the simple devices are made up,* are marked out with lamp-black made into a paste with water, and the pattern is pricked in by a Toda woman with the spines of *Berberis aristata*. The system of tattooing and decoration of females with ornaments is summed up in the following cases:— 304 [386]

1. Aged 22. Has one child. Tattooed with three dots on back of left hand. Wears silver necklet ornamented with Arcot two-anna pieces; thread and silver armlets ornamented with cowry (*Cypræa moneta*) shells on right upper arm; thread armlet ornamented with cowries on left forearm; brass ring on left ring finger; silver rings on right middle and ring fingers. Lobes of ears pierced. Ear-rings removed owing to grandmother's death. [531] [301] [765]

* *See* Madras Museum Bull., IV, 1896, pl. XII. [113]

7:Thurston E-5 (no date)1909
AW60 Toda AW60



While the funeral game was in progress, the men showed off their prowess at a game (eln),* corresponding to the English tip-cat, which is epidemic at a certain season in the London bye-streets. It is played with a bat like a broomstick, and a cylindrical piece of wood pointed at both ends. The latter is propped up against a stone, and struck with the bat. As it flies off the stone, it is hit to a distance with the bat, and caught (or missed) by the out fields.

At the Muttanād mand, we were treated to a further exhibition of games. In one of these, called narthpimi, a flat slab of stone is supported horizontally on two other slabs fixed perpendicularly in the ground so as to form a narrow tunnel, through which a man can just manage to wriggle his body with difficulty. Two men take part in the game, one stationing himself at a distance of about thirty yards, the other about sixty yards from the tunnel. The front man, throwing off his mantle, runs as hard as he can to the tunnel, pursued by the 'scratch' man, whose object is to touch the other man's feet before he has squeezed himself through the tunnel. Another sport, which we witnessed, consists of trial of strength with a heavy globular stone, the object being to raise it up to the shoulder; but a strong, well-built-man—he who was entrusted with slaying the funeral buffalo—failed to raise it higher than the pit of the stomach, though straining his muscles in the attempt. A splendidly made veteran assured me that, when young and lusty, he was able to accomplish the feat, and spoke sadly of degeneration in the physique of the younger members of the tribe.

Mr. Breeks mentions that the Todas play a game resembling puss-in-the-corner, called kāriālapimi, which

* Called by Breeks ilatu, [which, Dr. Rivers suggests, is a Badaga name.